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GOOD FRIDAY

a PASSION PLAY of NOW

by TRACY D. MYGATT

with introduction by

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

GOOD FRIDAY

A PASSION PLAY OF NOW

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by

TRACY D. MYGATT

author of "WATCHFIRES", "THE NOOSE", and other plays

with an introduction by

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

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PRICE, FIFTY CENTS

GOOD FRIDAY, A PASSION PLAY OF NOW, was first produced at the Peabody Playhouse, 357 Charles Street, Boston, April 19, 1919, under the direction of John Pratt Whitman and Eleanor Wood Whitman, and with the following cast:

THE KEEPER.....JOHN PRATT WHITMAN
THE DOCTOR.....JAMES H. DALTON
IVAN.....HARRY MAXIMON

A second production was given at the Central Music Hall in Chicago on May 14th, 1919, under the direction of David Douglas, and with the following cast:

THE KEEPER.....DAVID DOUGLAS
THE DOCTOR.....M. L. SORBER
IVAN.....ARTHUR PROCTOR

To the

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR,—

Who builds today
The Cooperative Commonwealth,
The City of God.

INTRODUCTION

Miss Mygatt's "Passion Play of Now" deals with one of the most highly controverted questions of the Great War—that of the so-called "conscientious objector," who, for inward reasons of opinion or conviction, refused to obey the nation's call to take up arms and submit himself to training for battle against the enemy. It is an extraordinarily vivid and sympathetic portrayal of the spiritual issue which was involved in this problem, the lofty motives of love and brotherhood which were frequently at work, and the essential religious drama which was enacted in case of punishment and persecution. The author's skilful use of the Good Friday setting points its own terrific moral. Few persons, of whatsoever opinion on the "conscientious objector" question, will read this play without profound emotion; none, I trust, without thinking the problem through afresh, with real endeavor at least to understand. If Americans are still Americans, with sentiments unspoiled, however much disturbed, by the fears and passions engendered by the conflict against Germany, this play should do for "conscientious objectors" in this

country what John Galsworthy's "Justice" did for ordinary prisoners in England.

It may be well to recapitulate briefly the circumstances which led to the sorry situation which disgraced the nation during the War, and still exists to its shame six full months after the signing of the armistice.

When the Conscription Act was passed on May 18, 1917, it was well known that there were a considerable number of citizens in the country who regarded war as murder, and military service as deliberate training for murder. Congress itself recognized this fact by exempting from military and naval service "any person . . . who is found to be a member of any well-recognized religious sect or organization at present organized and existing and whose existing creed or principles forbid its members to participate in war in any form and whose religious convictions are against war or participation therein. . . . "

This provision was excellent, so far as it went; but it fell short in two particulars. In the first place it made the ridiculous ethical mistake of regarding conscience as a corporate and not an individual affair, and therefore of accepting outward membership in an institution (which might well be a matter of inheritance or accident), instead of inward personal conviction, as evidence of reality. In the second place, it confined the action of conscientious

scruples against war to the religious field, and thus gave no recognition to that large and growing class of objectors who are moved by political rather than spiritual motives. The former of these blunders was partially corrected by Executive Order of the President (March 23, 1918); the latter inhered throughout the War, and is still working its havoc at the present moment.

The real betrayal of the nation, however, appeared in the administration of the law, rather than in the law itself. At the very outset was committed the fearful blunder of handing over the "objectors" to the military branch of the government for treatment, instead of keeping them in the civilian branch where they properly belonged, and thus subjecting them to the insane and uncontrolled rigors of martial law. Hundreds of "objectors" were thus segregated, beset by orders which they could not heed, court-martialled for disobedience, and condemned to ferocious sentences in miltary prisons.

More serious was the almost universal suspicion with which these men were regarded by those to whose mercy they were committed. We now know that this suspicion was not justified. Major Walter G. Kellogg, of the U. S. Board of Inquiry, testifies that whereas in the beginning of his work he "firmly believed that they (the conscientious objectors) were, as a class, shirkers and cowards, . . . an examination of over eight hundred objectors in twenty

widely distributed military camps and posts convinced (him) that they (were), as a rule, sincere—cowards and shirkers, in the commonly accepted sense, they (were) not." Nevertheless, on the assumption of their insincerity, these men were subjected to inquisition, and those most truly sincere and therefore unwilling to accept any form of service, non-combatant or other, given over to punishment.

The result was the almost complete defeat of the law, and of a well-intentioned government. Hundreds of members of religious sects opposed to war, specifically exempted by the terms of the Conscription Act, were put behind the bars; I have on my desk a list of three hundred and fifty-six at Fort Leavenworth on March 10, 1919. Hundreds of others, bravely sincere for religious or political reasons, were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment because of petty infractions of discipline, refusal to obey military orders, or failure to satisfy the Board of Inquiry. Control by the military led inevitably to persecution and torture. Solitary confinement, midnight baths under ice-cold showers, beating up by armed guards, immersion in the filth of latrines, assaults with fists, clubs, fire hose—numerous instances of these horrors are on record. A few men died from oppression, many sickened or were dangerously injured, all suffered cruelly in mind and body. Nothing depicted, stated, or suggested in

this play is an exaggeration. And the crime of these men, in most cases, was simply that of "taking Jesus at His word!"

Now the War is over, and many of these men have on one pretext or another been released. Many, however, are still languishing in jail, with little prospect of release. Their one hope is amnesty, immediate and universal; and to this end should all who love America, and would keep her free from shame, now work untiringly. There is no conceivably worthy motive in keeping these men longer behind prison walls. Their punishment vindicates no law, acts as no deterrent upon others, exerts no redemptive influence upon themselves. Every principle of justice, every plea of mercy, every ideal of America and purpose in her battle against Germany, clamors for their release. Only vengeance and the still unsated passion of war, bar their passage to freedom. If these men are forgotten by their fellows, or condemned by deliberate judgment to a continuance of their misery, there can be only one conclusion drawn —that is, that all the conscience there is in America, is now in prison!

To avoid this shame, as well as to deliver these martyrs to conviction, Miss Mygatt has written this play. "If any man has ears to hear, let him hear"; and hearing, let him act.

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES.

New York, May 8, 1919.

GOOD FRIDAY

A PASSION PLAY OF NOW

SCENE

The corridor before a cell in a Military Prison.

TIME

Before dawn, Good Friday

PERSONS

The Keeper,
The Doctor,
The Sacrifice (Ivan).

The scene is the draughty stone corridor of the north wing of the prison. As the curtain rises, what was at first perceived as pitchy black is shot with flickering lights, and the voices of two men are heard, as they stumblingly approach; for an instant, still invisible, they pause, apparently to unlock a door off left, for a heavy, grating sound is heard. Then they come on, Keeper and Doctor, stopping before the iron door, centre, which is the entrance into the cell whose inmate they have come to visit, and upon which begin to play grotesque shadows from the lantern in the hand of the Keeper. His face, too, when caught in its rays, reveals aspects curiously remote from the conventional masque his occupation would suggest; sensitive aspects, unhappy scepticisms and swift recalcitrancies making him, to the discerning eye, almost as anomalous in his setting as is the doctor, with his cold, cruel lips, and the shifty glance that mocks its owner's boasted therapy. In the voices of both, beneath the bravado of the one and the quick servility of the other, lurks the deadliest of the prison blight,—fear.

DOCTOR

[*Irritably, as he approaches from the left*]

Damn him! What does he want, this time of night,
Dragging me from my bed—?

KEEPER

[*Hastily*]

It wasn't him!
He didn't ask for nothin', sir! 'Twas me!
He never asks for nothin'—that's the thing,—
It makes you nervous—kind of creepy, sir,
I thought you'd better see—

DOCTOR

[*Brusquely*]

Well, let me in!
Be quick about it, too! It's beastly cold
In this north wing!

KEEPER

Yes, sir, at once! At once!
[*He does not move*]

DOCTOR

[*Testily*]

Well, then, why don't you? You're cold, too!
Why, man,
Your teeth are chattering, and your hands—

KEEPER

Please, sir,
It's not the cold—!

DOCTOR

Well, spit it out!

KEEPER

It's—it's—

[*He stops, unable to say more.*]

DOCTOR

[*Shaking him by the arm*]

What is it, man? Your face—do you know, Jack,
You look—it's that queer light, there is, of course,
Your silly trembling hands flinging the green rays

Of your night-lantern so about—! You look
As if you'd seen a ghost!

KEEPER

[*Swiftly*]

Oh, no, no, sir!
I never seen a ghost! I don't believe
In no such nonsense! Dead is dead, I say,
And quick is quick!

DOCTOR

[*With a laugh*]

Well, if he's quick in there,
[*with a jerk toward the closed door*]
It's more than you are—out!
[*Seizing him roughly*]
Make haste!

KEEPER

[*With a violent shiver*]

Don't! Don't!

DOCTOR

[*With ironic curiosity*]

Don't what, you fool?

KEEPER

(*Too frightened to resent his tone*]

Don't joke! Don't laugh! Remember
What night this is, sir!

DOCTOR

[*In extreme irritation*]

What—? Will you unlock?
Or must I take the key myself? [*Mockingly*]
"What night?"
You stand there asking that, this time of night,
Until I'll root to the spot in a minute,
Just like you! "What night?" A hell of a night
If you want my views—!

KEEPER

[*With a shudder*]

May God forgive you, sir,
For saying such a thing—and here—[*very low*]
where he
Could hear you!

DOCTOR

[*Jeeringly*]

Hah! Not through that door!

KEEPER

Hush, sir!

It might be—

DOCTOR

[*Cutting in with a jeer*]

And he'd be shocked at me? Christ!
I am to mind my language for a slacker!
Is that it, Jack? And be yanked out of bed
Because you think he needs a pill—the cur—
That stands all day above his uniform,
—The glorious garb that most men honor—love—
And he won't touch to save himself from torture!
Too good for it he thinks himself! The fool,
To court starvation rather than wear it!
Think of it, Jack! You know some day he'll die,
Even he can't live forever on such fare, and—

KEEPER

[*Desperately*]

No, no! Not that! Take it back, sir! Take it back!

Not die! Not in my time! [*Very low*] I couldn't bear
To've been the Keeper of a man that died—!

DOCTOR

Stow it! Don't many die? Nor my fault, either,
All the doctors going can't save a man
Once prison really gets him! Odd thing, that,
How you don't need capital punishment
To do the work!—Now open up, Jack, quick!

KEEPER

[*To himself*]

Not die! Not with that face! I don't know where
I've seen that face before, but—

DOCTOR

[*Impatiently snatching the key from him and with cold fingers twisting it in the great lock of the door.*]

Damn! It's stiff!
It won't budge! Here, you—lend a hand! Look here,

I don't believe you were made for a keeper!
If you don't hurry up I'll have you fired!
Or [*Suddenly wheeling about and staring into his eyes*]
or would you rather I went back again
To bed?

KEEPER

[*Taking the key in frantic haste*]

No, no! I'll open, sir! I'll open!
[*Slowly the lock yields to his pressure and the heavy door begins to swing open. For a moment, himself seeing what is within and is as yet invisible to the other, the Keeper stays it in his hand, turning upon the Doctor wide eyes of incredulous wonder.*]
And it Good Friday, sir! Good Friday!

DOCTOR

[*Contemptuously*]

Well—?
[*Then, unable or unwilling to speak further, the Keeper allows the door to swing wide open. At first it seems as if one were gazing into void; then, as the blackness yields to the dim rays of the lantern, one makes out the bars of a cage,*

some six by seven, within which, below the tiny barred window high above his head at the back of the cell, there stands a man in scanty underwear. One says "stands" rather in point of fact than of effect; for, though his bare feet rest upon the floor, just clear of the rumpled khaki that is his uniform, the arms, wide-flung like the arms of a cross, and the expression upon the tragic bearded face suggests a figure that hangs, rather than stands. And that it suggests the *Figure upon the Cross is at once apparent in the startled gesture of the Doctor outside the cell.*]

DOCTOR

[*Retreating a step further into the corridor*]

Good God!

KEEPER

[*Quietly, though he trembles*]

Yes, sir,—like that each time I come! That's why—

DOCTOR

[*Trying to recover himself, the prisoner throughout wholly detached*]

But he's not chained or—hung?

KEEPER

No, sir!

DOCTOR

His arms are free? He *can* move them about?

KEEPER

Yes, sir. But every night, the last four days,
After I've taken off the manacles
That chain him to the bars—

DOCTOR

[*Starting*]

He's chained all day?

KEEPER

[*Stolidly*]

Them are my orders, sir, and very strict!
[*Then with sudden fierceness*]
I wish to God some other keeper here
Had my job!

DOCTOR

Hush! What were you going to say?

KEEPER

[*In a low voice*]

Well, every night this week I've found him—
[*with a gesture*] so—!

DOCTOR

[*Restlessly*]

Why don't you tell him to lie down?

KEEPER

I have!
I've begged him to, time and again at night,
When I've come stealin' up like this!

DOCTOR

And what—?

KEEPER

He only looks at me, and when he's looked
A long, long time, sometimes he speaks and says—

DOCTOR

[*Furtively regarding the prisoner*]

What does he say?

KEEPER

He says, "I must keep watch!"

DOCTOR

[*With an uneasy attempt at a laugh*]

And yet there isn't much for him to see!

IVAN

[*Softly but very distinctly*]

I must keep watch!

KEEPER

[*Starting*]

There, sir!—What did I—

DOCTOR

Hush!

Faking, that's all! Wants to get out of here!

KEEPER

[*Eagerly*]

No sir, he never speaks of getting out!
Nor of the beatings and them icy baths,—

You know, those months in camp before he came.
It seems like he was very far away—
I can't explain—you couldn't sir, yourself,
There's things inside his head—there must be, sir,
To give his eyes that look—

IVAN
[*As before*]

I must keep watch!

DOCTOR
[*Facing him insolently*]

On what? On us, you silly faking coward?
No, sir, that's our job, Evetts here and mine,
[*in a business-like tone*]

Our job to watch *you!* Do you understand?
[*making a move forward*]

Here, now! Cut out that stuff! We've had enough!
Put down your arms!
[*As he does not move*]

Damn you, put down your arms!

KEEPER

[*Anxiously interposing*]

He don't obey no orders, sir!

DOCTOR

I know!
But I'm a doctor! That's a different thing!
Perhaps he hasn't in the past because
They were all orders from the Commandant,
The Military orders they despise,
These precious conscientious fools we've got,
Corrupting other soldiers!—Well, go in!

[*With a gesture*]

Unlock those bars! I guess he's weak enough
For two of us to manage! [*In a sharp whisper*]
You've your gun?
You keep it with you when you come up here?

KEEPER

[*Shamefacedly*]

Yes, sir, but he—

DOCTOR

Don't talk! I'm loaded, too!

[*He draws out his revolver.*]

Go in, and put his arms down—then I'll come!

[*As the doctor covers the figure with his revolver and stands narrowly watching him, the Keeper unlocks the barred grating, Ivan still giving no sign that he sees what is going on, continuing to stare fixedly beyond; inside the cell, the Keeper hesitantly approaches him.*]

THE KEEPER

[*Unsteadily*]

Put your arms down—please!

DOCTOR

[*Furiously*]

Is that your method?
Put them down yourself!

[*With an angry gesture*]

Like this—now do it!

KEEPER

[*As before*]

Please, sir,—I—I can't! I couldn't touch him!
[*Swallowing hard*]
Not when he looks like—that—!
[*With sudden passion*]
Oh, can't you *see*—?

DOCTOR

[*Angrily*]

See? Yes! A slacker! And either faking mad,
Or perhaps—[*coming closer*]—perhaps—

KEEPER

[*With desperate eagerness*]

Yes, yes! Perhaps, sir—?

DOCTOR

[*Insolently*]

Or perhaps really mad!
[*Ironically regarding the horror on the other's face*]
What did you think
That I would say, you superstitious fool?

KEEPER

[*Softly, cowering beside the rapt figure*]

They all said that before, that other time,
Or that He had a devil, or—

DOCTOR

[*Starting, scarcely believing his ears*]

Damn you!
Stop it, I say! Or I'll begin to think
You're in cahouts somehow, collecting cash
From friends on the outside, to set him free!
[*Meaningly*]
And taking bribes'—a pretty serious crime!

KEEPER

[*Hoarsely*]

I don't know what you mean! I've never tried
To get him out!
[*With shuddering self-realization*]
I am his Keeper, sir!
His Keeper! *His!* In prison! Twenty years!
[*With mounting wildness*]
But no one bribed me, sir! It wasn't me!

It wasn't *me*, I say!

[*With passionate earnestness*]

I never took
One single piece of silver, let alone
Thirty—!

[*For a moment, with irrepressible fear, the Doctor regards him. Then, surmounting his emotion, still covering Ivan with his revolver, he leaps inside the cell, and reaches his hand to the Keeper's wrist.*]

DOCTOR

[*Jerkily*]

Hush, Jack! You're sick! You don't know what
You're saying! Just come along with me, man!
I'll fix you up with something in my office!

KEEPER

[*As if coming to himself*]

I'm not sick, sir! It's him you come to see!

[*He goes quietly to Ivan and takes one of his hands in his.*]

It's hot, sir—don't you think you'd better feel?

DOCTOR

[*Taking a step*]

Well, if *you* feel it hot—[*softly*] your own is fire!
[*He goes to Ivan and takes his wrist reluctantly between his fingers. A moment passes.*]

DOCTOR

[*Under his breath*]

God! What a pulse! I can't count that! (*To Ivan, more gently*] Here, you—!
Lie down a bit! [*Looking about*] Why, where's your bed gone, man?

KEEPER

He's never had no bed, sir! You know that!
Not since he's brought up here in solitary.
Maybe that's why he stands. Of course the floor's
Chock full of vermin here, spite of the cold!
They wouldn't send no blankets to him, either—

DOCTOR

[*Impatiently*]

Of course! [*To Ivan*] Why don't you be a decent soldier, man?
Your conscience isn't different from the rest!
It's all the same, you know,—just clay in the end!
You can't go on like this—you're very sick—
This business' got you nothing but starvation!
You're young to die, and yet, if you persist—

KEEPER

[*Imploringly, drawing closer*]

Don't let him die! Please, sir, don't let him die!

[*In a low voice*]

I beat him once—to make him mind—! Oh, God,
I'd die to undo it now! Don't let him die!

[*The Doctor looks curiously from one to the other. Then, as he steps back into the corridor*]

DOCTOR

[*To himself*]

He's bitten, too! Queer how a man's mind goes!

[*Rousing himself*]

Don't worry! It's all right! I'll fix him, Jack!
We'll go downstairs and 'phone the hospital;
They'll have to send a cot! He couldn't walk
After this foolish business he's been through,
He's ready to collapse right now, poor fool,
Or will, as soon as this trance-state is ended,—
Then we'll put you to bed—

[*Starting violently as he sees the Keeper bending over Ivan's hand*]

Why, Jack! Look up!
What are you looking at?

KEEPER

[*Kneeling and kissing the hand passionately*]

The nails! The nails!
The print of the nails—!

[*There is a moment of profound silence during which the extent of the Keeper's obsession perhaps first penetrates the mind of the Doctor,*

though indeed, in the one startled and inquiring glance he flashes upon the tragic, far-seeing eyes of Ivan, and upon the hand the Keeper holds pressed to his lips, there is hint of a fleeting turmoil of his own. Then, as the man, overcome by the stress of his emotions and his gathering fever, suddenly falls forward, fainting, upon the floor, the Doctor forces himself to re-enter the cell, and gently tries to detach the inert body of the Keeper from that of his prisoner, who still stands, cross-like, seemingly unconscious of the happenings about him.]

DOCTOR

[*Gently tugging at the Keeper*]

Jack! Jack! Wake up! Wake up!

[*As he does not respond, he steals a furtive glance at Ivan, as quickly averting his eyes and redoubling his efforts to rouse the other; presently realizing their futility, and himself unpleasantly conscious of the strangeness of the situation, he begins to drag him outside into the corridor. This accomplished, with trembling hands he pulls to the grating and locks*

it; then he looks dubiously at the big second door and shakes his head.]

[*To himself*]

The Prisoner's weak—better leave that alone,
So that he'll get more air; and I'll be back
With help in just a minute!

[*Resting his hand a moment on the Keeper's pulse.*]

He's all right!

Where's that lamp gone?

[*After a flurried search, he picks the lantern up from the floor, nervously examines it, and, after a shifty glance over his shoulder at Ivan, who responds in no way whatever, he hurries away down the corridor whence he has come, his nervous steps gathering curious significance as they re-echo along the stone passage-way, and the tall flickerings of the lantern making more sensible the thick darkness that settles over the place at his departure. For a long moment, after the vibration of his steps has ceased, there is silence. Then, into this silence, breaks the voice of Ivan, conveying in even the opening words a great tranquility.*]

IVAN

Come, little brother, Christ!
They've gone away, the shadows that were here—
And left me all alone, waiting for You!
I am so glad to be alone again!
Now I can talk—I couldn't talk before—
I just stood watching. All the tortured things
That cried to You on Your cross so long ago,
I seemed to see them and to feel Your pain!
And others, too, I watched, and longed to help,
Dark mysteries of torment; pitiful,
Sacrificed, astonished, lost, and each one
Young, with lovely dreams all twisted in his eyes;
And some of them saw me, and raised their hands—
Hands crucified and young, like Yours, oh, Christ!—
And blessed me for the watch I kept; and then
It faded—everything—and I was here.
The man that comes most is so strange and sad—
The one that brings me water—why is he
Like that? Why does he weep? I'm sure he does;

He wept tonight, and moaned, and kissed my hand;
From very far away I felt his tears,
And tried to speak, but could not—only feel.
And there are times he reaches out his arms
As if I could assuage the pain within
That seems to torture him! How can it be
When he can come and go under the sky?
The sky! The sky! Oh, little brother Christ!
It's when I think about the bright gold sun,
And the glad sky high up among the birds,
That I think prison is a dreadful place!
I wonder how much longer it will be?—
One night, a little while ago, I think,
I thought that I was home, under the sky,
Ploughing the farm I gave to Sonia
When we were married; and that she ran out
Singing the song we used to sing at home,
Over in Russia, when I was a child;
She had our children with her by the hand,
Sasha and Vera and the little one
That only toddled when I went away;
They too were singing, and I caught them close,
And all of us stood singing, thanking God!

There was such sunshine over everything!
I wonder if I could not sing the song?
It might bring back the vision and the peace!

[*There is a moment's silence; then, as the first gray light of morning is perceived to be seeping through the barred window behind Ivan's head, he very simply breaks into the opening lines of the Kolebalnia. As the song continues there is a faint movement upon the floor where the Keeper has been lying, and as it ceases, his voice is heard, hushed and awe-struck.*]

KEEPER

Singing upon the Cross! How can it be?
I must be mad, and yet I thought I heard—

[*He is dimly seen, raised on his elbow, gazing into the cell.*]

Yes, yes! Who are you? And why are you here?
And were you singing? And where is the lamp?

[*Burying his face in his hands*]

Oh, Lord forgive me! I who saw the nails—
To ask of you—! Of you!—!

IVAN

[*Gently*]

It is all right!
Why are you frightened? You know He is here,
Darkness and light are just the same to Him!

KEEPER

[*Chokingly*]

Yes, He *is* here! I've known it all along,
But more and more each night—until I *saw*—!

[*softly*]

When will the Resurrection be?

[*Then swiftly, before Ivan can speak*]

No, wait!

[*Getting to his feet*]

I want to bar the door down there—

[*with a gesture, left*]

so he
Won't come in suddenly! He'd only jest,

[*In sombre triumph*]

He didn't see the nails! *He* couldn't see—!

[*He disappears for a moment, left, and the clanking of the door which was heard in the beginning is heard again, followed by the bolt-*

ing of the same. Then the Keeper returns, fumbling in his pocket, presently producing something which when he has struck a match is seen to be a candle; this he lights and places upon the stone floor outside the cell, seating himself beside it.]

KEEPER

[*Softly*]

It isn't that I'm frightened any more!
At least I think I'm not! I only want
To see your face! I want to see the love
That's in your eyes—!

[*Intently looking*]

Yes, yes, I *do* see now!
How can one man love other men so much
That he can bear to die—that way—like you?

IVAN

[*Gently*]

He showed us first the way!

[*Then, as the bells of a neighboring church begin to toll for early service, the Keeper, too startled to catch the other's full meaning, cowers miserably closer.*]

KEEPER

[*In a shaking voice*]

And now you will!
You will again—! Oh, God, to see you die,
Just when at last I might have felt your love!

IVAN

[*Gently*]

Why should you think I'll die? I've prayed to die
So often all these months! It's not the pain.
I'm very sure it's not the pain I mind,

[*Wonderingly*]

It's thinking other men can torture so,
Men that are brothers!—Hark! What are those bells?
Are they real bells, I wonder, or just bells
Making a sorrowful music in my head,
Where sunlight dances on the way to the Cross?

KEEPER

[*With painful eagerness, as he kneels beside the cage*]

That's it! That's it! They *are* the bells to the Cross!

[*In a hushed voice*]

And me that used to want—oh, to remember!—
To be a priest, when I was still a boy,
And deck the altar for the Sacrifice,
And now—oh, now—after the twisted steps
My feet have taken all the twisted years
To kneel here now—*beside the Sacrifice,*
The living Sacrifice—the dying Christ—!

IVAN

[*Faintly*]

Living—not dying! Surely Christ never dies!
It is His love today—

KEEPER

[*Breaking in*]

But on the Cross—?

[*Pointing to the wide-flung arms*]

Your arms stretched wide—your word,—"I must keep watch!"
Quick! Tell me what you meant—"I must keep watch!"
You said it every night I came! And oh,
How could you bear to seem a *slacker*—? *You*—?

IVAN

[*With painful pauses*]

I wish you'd asked before—it's getting dark!
I had to watch over the tortured world,—
I don't know whether I can make it plain;

[*After a pause*]

And that word—

KEEPER

"Slacker?"

IVAN

Yes; I've heard them say
That word so often lately—well, no matter—!

[*Suddenly, with passionate energy*]

I wanted to love back the world to love!
I wanted to love back the world to love!

KEEPER

[*Timidly*]

But Germany—?

IVAN

[*Spurred on by his spirit*]

Nothing but love can heal!

KEEPER

[*With painful eagerness*]

And there are men—of course not with your face—
Not even Christians, so they often say!
Men here in prison, men that will not fight,
"Slackers" they call them, just as they called —you—!
They won't hit when they're hurt; they speak of love,
—They call it brotherhood—! What do they mean?
They stay long terms; they won't betray this thing—
What does it all mean?

IVAN

[*As before, though by still greater effort*)

What I've said! Oh, brother,
What does the name matter, so they do the will?
They keep the watch—their watch and mine—

[*Suddenly raising his arms in ecstasy as a*

shaft of light pierces the window, and shines upon his head.]

Oh, God!
The sunlight's coming—and my watch is ended!

KEEPER

[*In bitter anguish*]

No! No! Stay with me!

IVAN

[*Radiantly*]

Little brother, *love—!*

[*Then quietly, without struggle, he sinks down upon the uniform at his feet, his arms unconsciously assuming their old posture, and his radiant face caught in the ray of sunlight. The bells, which had stopped, begin again to chime, this time a Gregorian chant to one of the Penitential Psalms, and the Keeper kneels quietly, his face against the bars. Suddenly a great knocking is heard upon the iron door, off left. The Keeper raises his head, at first in dumb bewilderment; then, as the sound grows louder, anger and bitter distrust rob his face of his late-found peace.*]

KEEPER

[*Under his breath*]

Let him knock!

[*Then, between the knocking, the Doctor's voice, off left.*]

DOCTOR

[*Startled*]

Jack! Are you sick? Come! Open!

[*There is a further moment of suspense, broken by the continued knocking. Then the Keeper rises, and moves uneasily toward the door which he has locked, pausing often to steal backward glances at the dead body. For a moment he is gone, and his voice can be heard off left.*]

KEEPER

[*Tonelessly*]

Please come alone, sir! Let the men wait here!

[*They reappear, the Keeper walking softly ahead, the Doctor following, a visible fear in face and manner, the flickering of his lantern overcasting him with curious gleams.*]

DOCTOR

But why—? I'm glad you're better, Jack, but why—

[*Then, as he comes before the body, within the bars, lying on the uniform, its radiant, upturned face white and still in the dawn, his face sharply changes; and with a cry, as if the admission were wrung from him, he exclaims*]

DOCTOR

The face of Christ—!

[*There is a moment of profound silence, the Keeper standing, with bowed head, beside the other, the tears coursing down his seamed cheeks. Then, with a terrible cry, he rushes forward.*]

KEEPER

[*Desperately*]

Yes, yes, the face of Christ!
But who am *I*, then? That's what I must know!
Answer me quickly! Who am I? Oh, God—
To know and love Him—only to be damned—!

[*He breaks into dry, shaking sobs.*]

DOCTOR

[*Touching him gently*]

What is it, man? You're overwrought! Come down!
Get out of this!

KEEPER

[*In a voice of anguish*]

Oh, to get out of the world—!

[*Turning bitter eyes upon him.*]

Don't you know who I am? Since he is Christ—
And I have been his Keeper,—killing him—
Manacled, chained, betrayed to those He loved—
Why—why—

[*Pointing with trembling fingers to his own breast*]

queer how I never guessed before,
But now I know—

[*Beckoning the Doctor close and speaking in a terrified whisper into his ear*]

Judas Iscariot—!

DOCTOR

[*Deeply moved, trying to shake off their mutual fear*]

No, no! He isn't really Christ, you know!

[*Wonderingly, to himself*]

—That's the queer part, now that I stop to think—

Doing this thing he did, not being Christ!

—Almost enough to make a man believe—!

[*Rousing himself and turning to the Keeper*]

But he's not really Christ—

KEEPER

[*Brokenly*]

I cannot tell;

I know he loved like Christ—that's why he died—.

The way they kept him in that dungeon cell—

The beatings and the hunger and the cold!

And I—that killed him—

[*In a desperate whisper*]

Judas—that's my name!

DOCTOR

[*In a strange voice, looking straight ahead of him to the dead face*]

Not your name only, then! Listen to me!
You didn't ask to have him here—?

KEEPER

No, no!

DOCTOR

But others did—you know that, don't you?

KEEPER

Yes!

DOCTOR

[*With dry lips*]

Then don't you understand?

[*As the other makes no sign, he continues passionately, as if moved beyond himself*]

It's all of us!
It's all of us,—anywhere—everywhere—!
I called him "Slacker," "Coward," with the rest,
And some of them will kneel in church today,

By the veiled image of the Crucified,
With that name in their hearts, scorn for the man
Whose crime is taking Jesus at His word—!
I did not know before—I may forget—
But I know now,—looking upon that face:

[*Then, as the Keeper waits*]

We all are Judas—we that keep him bound—!

[*And he bows his head, slowly sinking upon his knees by the barred cell. For a moment the Keeper regards him, as if pondering his last words, weighing, as it were, their relation to himself, and makes as if he too would kneel. Then, as if the very soul of him were repudiating what is for him the too facile distribution of guilt, he wheels abruptly about, and stands facing the audience, his fingers twisted in the bars, in his sombre, tortured eyes and twitching lips, something of the self-horror and despair of the Betrayer.*]

CURTAIN

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